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I Know You Are, But What Am I? The Language of Trauma and Identity Formation in Virginia
Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* and Vladimir Nabokov's *Lolita*

by

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Literature, as well as all other forms of art and self-expression, is a mediation between individuals and their experience with the world. These attempts result in novels that represent particular struggles of a particular time. This paper aims to explore the language of trauma, specifically in the formation of identity in both Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* and Vladimir Nabokov's *Lolita*. How do these texts use narrative form in order to capture the invisible and unspeakable dimensions of trauma? I will explore how each considers the aspects of gender and sexuality in its examination of trauma and narrative form. In order to argue this, I will be taking recourse to Cathy Caruth's *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* and Shoshana Felman's *Writing and Madness*, both of which explore the relationship between narrative and trauma. In addition to trauma, this paper will focus on how both authors engage psychoanalytic theory more broadly, especially Freud's work, with their use of the double, the uncanny, and the infantile wish. I will explore the ways in which trauma plays into the development of central characters within each text, focusing on the relationship that language has in depicting traumatic events and their aftermaths; I will also analyze the role classic psychoanalytic themes, such as the double, and recurrence, play in character development in the two texts.

In Cathy Caruth's introduction to *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* she states, "Literature, like psychoanalysis, is interested in the complex relation between knowing and not knowing. And it is at the specific point at which knowing and unknowing intersect that the language of literature and psychoanalytic theory precisely meet" (3). In Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* this intersection is vividly present in the lives of the two protagonists, Septimus and Clarissa. Septimus's trauma from the war is blatant, or "known," especially to a reader in a post-psychoanalytic era. Septimus and his wife understand that he

suffers from trauma because they are going to see a psychiatrist, which shows the self-conscious aspect of Septimus's trauma. Clarissa's trauma, however, is unknown to her. In order to maintain control over her own life, in a society that has complete control over her, Clarissa represses her desire for Sally as it wells up from the past. The language of Clarissa's trauma is more obscure and is rooted in the unconscious and psychoanalytic thought. Nabokov, in *Lolita*, utilizes the idea of knowing and unknowing in a similar way. By making his narrative a confessional, there is a clarity for the reader of where Humbert's trauma has stemmed from. What is unknown is Lolita's narrative and her voice within the novel. In the limited scenes in which she is given a narrative voice, her trauma is overshadowed by Humbert's elaborate language and nuanced sentence structure. In both Woolf's and Nabokov's works the trauma of the male characters are known, whereas the women characters and their traumas are expressed with greater opacity. Caruth's work, and this idea of "knowing and unknowing" will be the basis of this paper because it shows how trauma that is sustained in a conscious or subconscious way has an effect on language and identity.

Each of the authors reckon with psychoanalysis, and in particular Freud's work, in different ways. Nabokov publicly and strongly disliked Freud and psychoanalytic thought. In a 1966 interview conducted by the National Educational Television network, when asked why he detested Freud, Nabokov answered, "he's crude, I think he's medieval, and I don't want an elderly gentleman from Vienna with an umbrella inflicting his dreams upon me" ("A Portrait of My Uncle"). Throughout this novel Nabokov parodies modern psychiatry by using its foundations in an ironic way. Nabokov takes the tenets of trauma theory and creates a dynamic relationship between verbal language and unspeakable feeling, which is seen in the limited narrative of *Lolita*. Whereas Nabokov is hesitant to admit to his use of psychoanalysis, Woolf is

very clear that she intended Septimus and Clarissa to serve as doubles. In her introduction to the 1928 edition of the novel, Woolf states that, “Septimus, who was later intended to be her double, had no existence; and that Mrs. Dalloway was originally to kill herself” (*Virginia Woolf Reader* 11). Even though Woolf admired Freud and his work, there is still animosity towards the people in the field, which is represented in the novel by Sir William Bradshaw. By using Bradshaw as an archetypal analyst Woolf is critiquing the almost non-human, remote connection that pertains between patient and doctor. She states that by making him the “authority on diseases of the mind,” the novel constitutes “a powerful indictment of that small population of specialists who were themselves too deficient in sympathy to deal with the suffering of those who sought their help” (*Virginia Woolf Reader*, 44). Through Woolf’s diary entries one sees the gradual interest of Woolf into the field of psychoanalysis. Woolf actually met Freud at the end of his life, when he escaped Vienna before the war. In her 1939 entry she recounts, “Dr. Freud gave me a narcissus... a screwed up shrunk very old man... immense potential, I mean an old fire now flickering...” (*Virginia Woolf Reader* 329–30). However, it is only until after Freud died that her real interest grew. Woolf’s diary entry for December 1939 records that she “(b)egan reading Freud last night; to enlarge the circumference, to give my brain a wider scope: to make it objective; to get outside. Thus, defeat the shrinkage of age. Always take on new things. Break the rhythm... I’m gulping up Freud” (333–4). Here is a personal account of how Freud opened up Woolf’s mind and allowed her to write her work and have a dialogue with him while creating her characters. Woolf saw Freud as a way to escape her own mind, and the fragmentation that is seen in her novel correlated to the “break the rhythm” idea she saw in Freud.

Regret is a prominent theme in *Mrs. Dalloway*. The novel takes place in post-war Britain, resulting in a constant sense of destruction and rebirth throughout the narrative. Clarissa's whole life is made up of a series of unfulfilled desires, moments that ended before they got started, and the many lives she could have had. Clarissa, like many other people of her time, struggles with her identity. But as the novel progresses, we see that this "identity" has been constructed by men and forced onto women. In *Mrs. Dalloway*, sexuality lies beneath the facade of British upper-class society. The whole novel takes place in preparation of and during a fairly typical dinner party. *Mrs. Dalloway* shows that sexuality is a very solitary experience, and that an unfulfilled and unknown desire for a certain life will always be present. Through her daughter, and the reemergence of Paul and Sally, Clarissa revisits her sexuality and is forced to reevaluate her identity.

Throughout the novel, Clarissa struggles with understanding her identity. She remembers the person she was when she was young and compares it to the woman she has since become. While she is crossing the street, the novel declares that "She had the oddest sense of being herself invisible, unseen; unknown; there being no more marrying, no more having children now...not even Clarissa anymore" (11). Clarissa is at a point in her life where the roles she has played are no longer necessary or relevant; she no longer has to be a doting wife and mother, so she has now become "unknown" to herself. Her husband, Richard, conducts his own social life and affairs, and her daughter, Elizabeth, is now older and pursuing her own wants. Clarissa is relieved of these responsibilities, yet they are the very things that have, until now, engulfed her identity. Clarissa's new identity is unknown to her, but she is very aware of her own diminishing sexuality which is seen when, "Feeling herself suddenly shriveled, aged, breastless, the grinding, blowing, flowering of the day, out of doors, out of her body and brain which now failed" (21).

Clarissa stands in front of a mirror and touches her body without recognizing it. Since she has gotten older, she has lost touch with her sexuality and cannot reconnect with herself mentally or physically.

Clarissa likes being mentally alone, yet she also craves connection and physical satisfaction. She has an unfulfilling relationship with her husband, though the two have a cordial relationship. Clarissa and Richard have slept in separate rooms since her illness, and she remarks that her bed would be getting “(n)arrower and narrower” (31). She thinks vaguely of how she still has a kind of “virginity... [that] clung to her like a sheet”; here Clarissa is reclaiming her sexuality and starting over again (31). Clarissa is comforted by the privacy she is given, but she also craves real passion. After she has looked at herself in the mirror, “she had seen an illumination... but the close withdrew; the hard softened. It was over – the moment” (32). This moment is highly erotic and implies Clarissa’s inability to reach full sexual satisfaction. Clarissa is aware of this inability: “She could see what she lacked. It was not beauty; it was not mind. It was something central which permeated; something warm which broke up surfaces and rippled the cold contact of man and woman, or of woman together” (31). In this moment Clarissa is aware that her husband gives her no physical pleasure, and she is also aware of her attraction to women. What is interesting about this moment is that Clarissa is standing in front of a mirror looking at an exact reflection of her physical body, yet her body’s desires and satisfaction are unattainable. Clarissa is dimly aware of what her desire is -- “she could see what she lacked” -- but she is too caught up in structure and formality to fully admit to herself what she wants. This makes her desire unattainable, rather than just unattained. She cannot, and will not, access into her unconscious because she fears that once her desires enter into her conscious mind, the life that she has built for herself will shatter. Rather than seeking satisfaction in the

present Clarissa must delve into the past in order to feel desire, because she knows she will never attain it again. Her expression of her failed attempt to regain this desire (“it was over – the moment”) highlights her inability to return to her past state (32).

Clarissa’s changing body has, in effect, changed her perception of her own sexuality. She has become distant from her physical body through age, and thus her mind has become disconnected with the passion and lust she had when she was younger. The disconnect between body and mind has left her unable to achieve full sexual satisfaction. Halberstam elucidates the structure of desire, and especially of the relationship of desire and language, in ways that relate closely to Clarissa’s dilemma: “Psychoanalysis posits a crucial relationship between language and desire, such that language structures desire and expresses therefore the fullness and the futility of human desire—full because we always desire, futile because we are never satisfied”(8). Clarissa is not able to carry out her desires because her desires exceed closely guarded norms in her society. This constraint leads her to a standstill and the inability to communicate or understand her own body. Halberstam argues that desire, even though a person wants to fill it, never will be satisfied, which is seen in Clarissa and the life she has led. The use of language when looking at desire plays into the language of trauma as well, because the repression of this desire is Clarissa’s trauma. Clarissa’s desires is the driving force in the novel because due to this repressed desire, which has now come out after not being fulfilled, Clarissa is forced to reevaluate her identity.

At the start of the novel, the narrator notes that Clarissa “had a passion for gloves; but her own daughter, Elizabeth, cared not a straw for them” (11). Gloves were fashionable at the time, but they also serve a different, more meaningful purpose; gloves hide a person’s true identity. Gloves hide a person’s fingerprint, which can never change, regardless of whether or not one is

struggling with their mental identity. Every individual has a particular fingerprint, something unique that separates him or her from the rest of the world. Clarissa is hesitant to uncover both her physical and mental identity, which is why she has such a fondness for covering her hands. Elizabeth, Clarissa's daughter, also represents the woman that Clarissa longs to be. The second half of the previously quoted line from the novel states that Clarissa's daughter, Elizabeth, didn't share the same affinity for gloves as her mother did, which corresponds to Elizabeth's strong sense of identity. Elizabeth is an interesting character and is the only character who embodies youth and hope throughout the novel. Elizabeth's identity and sexuality are known to her, which separates her from her mother. She came of age in a culturally transitional time for women, who are just now gaining power after they were left home while the men served in war. She creates a strong attachment to her teacher, Mrs. Kilman, who is very religious. Clarissa and Mrs. Kilman, on the other hand, have a hostile relationship, each trying to gain full control over Elizabeth. Mrs. Kilman represents everything that Clarissa is not. Mrs. Kilman is a born-again Christian who dresses badly because she does not need to impress anyone. She is a German, which in post-war England means that she is a social outsider, while Clarissa represents the epitome of the upper-class socialite.

Both of these women are set up in opposition to each other, yet both of these women want Elizabeth's love because she provides them with hope and strong self-awareness, and through her they can live vicariously. Elizabeth is a living, breathing reminder of everything they could have been but never were. Mrs. Kilman and Clarissa try to shape Elizabeth's sense of identity, each one trying to grasp the light in her. When Elizabeth and Mrs. Kilman are out to tea, Elizabeth is repulsed by the lack of manners she displays. As she tries to get up and leave, Mrs. Kilman's "large hand opened and shut on the table...if she could grasp her, if she could

clasp her, if she could make her hers absolutely and then die; that was all she wanted” (132). In this encounter, the idea of hands comes in again. In Clarissa’s case, her hands were delicate and always covered in white. Mrs. Kilman’s hands are clumsy and animal-like, as if she has claws. Mrs. Kilman’s identity is large and brash and uncovered, while Clarissa’s is cloaked under propriety and expectation. As much as identity is a mental idea, it also exists in the physical world, which is seen in these characters, and in this intergenerational strife. Elizabeth doesn’t have an affinity for either extremes, but instead is in the stage in her life where her identity is still fluid and just now forming. Both of these women possess a fragmented sense of identity in relation to the hopeful and not-fully formed identity of Elizabeth.

When Clarissa was a young woman, she was attracted to Sally Seton, a young woman who was staying in her home. They had shared one kiss, which was interrupted by Peter Walsh, a man who was in love with Clarissa. Clarissa holds onto this moment that she has with Sally and her feelings accompanied with that kiss. Clarissa makes Sally into almost a mythical being, and the moment that they shared into the pinnacle of romance and lust. Even though she is not physically there, her influence and presence in Clarissa’s mind is a prevalent idea throughout the novel. Clarissa holds onto this regret that they were interrupted “as if she has known all along that something would interrupt, would embitter her moment of happiness” (36). From that one disrupted moment on, Clarissa had been on autopilot. Her other relationships, with both Peter and Richard, have love in them, but neither create the same feeling of lust. That interrupted moment with Sally is the most erotic scene in the novel, the time when Clarissa felt most alive and present and consequently, the exact moment of Clarissa’s trauma. In a poetic narrative, Clarissa explains her growing relationship with Sally, saying that she possessed the beauty and freedom of saying and doing whatever she felt like. Sally opened Clarissa up to new ideas; they

spoke about life and “how they were going to reform the world” (33). Clarissa didn’t just want Sally sexually, she also wanted the freedom and careless nature that Sally had; she wanted to embody all that Sally was. Sally didn’t care for the rules; she was reckless and full of life, which Clarissa sees as beautiful. Sally represents the kind of person Clarissa wishes she could be, if only she could rid herself of societal expectations, “she knew nothing of sex—nothing about social problems” (33). These two seemingly contrasting ideas go hand in hand for Clarissa. Sexuality and society are closely related, because in society there are certain sexual rules that one must adhere to.

Throughout the novel, Sally has been mentioned and recalled, but she isn’t introduced in the flesh until the last couple of pages; she remains for the reader what she is for Clarissa – a fantasy. When Sally attends Clarissa’s dinner party, the reader learns that she too has lost her youthful inhibitions and has replaced them with a husband and five sons. Both Clarissa and Sally have become distant from the people they were in their youth, and have conformed to what society wanted from them. Sally only comes to Clarissa’s party after hearing about it through a third party. In entering, “(s)he loomed through a mist,” a mystical and fantasized being (171). Before Sally makes her entrance, Clarissa looks around the room remarking that, “every time she gave a party she had this feeling of being something not herself, and that everyone was unreal in one way” (171). Clarissa is detached from the party that she is hosting, feeling like a stranger in her own home, much like she was a stranger to her own body earlier that day. However, when Sally comes in, Clarissa “saw her rooms full, heard the roar of voices, saw the candlesticks, the blowing curtains” (171). Sally brings Clarissa back to life, taking her mind and body out of autopilot. And, even after all these years have passed, Sally presents Clarissa with a life that is full of heightened feeling, something she had lacked since their interrupted kiss. The attraction

and connection that Clarissa and Sally shared wasn't merely a rebellious, youthful rendezvous; it was real, but it was never given the chance to thrive and become something more than a fleeting moment. The idea of the "unknown" does not only pertain to identity, but also to the different futures the characters may have had if they did not go through their respective traumas.

Sally can be viewed as Clarissa's infantile wish, the being and feelings that she has repressed her entire life. Freud, in his essay *The Uncanny*, addresses the notion of infantile fears through two German words: *Heimlich* (familiar), and *Unheimlich* (unfamiliar). With these terms, Freud is exemplifying the uncanny feeling of something that is both known and concealed from a person. Just like something familiar can become unfamiliar, something unfamiliar can become familiar over time. This leads to an ambiguous nature – an interchangeable relationship between both the familiar and unfamiliar. In psychoanalytic thought, "every emotional effect, whatever its quality, is transformed by repression into morbid anxiety" (429). What Freud is arguing is that this sense of uncanny is when morbid anxieties reoccur and bring the repressed infantile fears into the conscious mind. Freud explains this through "repetition-compulsion"(427). This is when there is a reoccurring event, object, or situation that is happening in someone's life that, because of this person's time, place, and/or superstition, they ascribe meaning to these random events. This meaning leads them to feel a sense of uncanniness whenever this object or situation is seen. The anxiety and detachment that Clarissa feels is caused by these repressed feelings she had for Sally.

The influence that Sally has on Clarissa is seen from the very start of the novel. The novel starts off with the sentence, "Mrs. Dalloway said she would buy the flowers herself," which places the reader in the midst of an ordinary day in the life of Clarissa Dalloway (1). Clarissa wanted to get the flowers herself, because flowers represent the time she had with Sally:

“Sally’s power was amazing, her gift, her personality. There was her way with flowers, for instance” (33). In the moment before Sally kissed Clarissa, “Sally stopped; picked a flower; kissed her on the lips” (5). The image of the flower has great importance within this moment, as it shows the natural essence of their interaction. This is why, in the future, Clarissa wanted to get the flowers herself—she wants to regain and revisit the moment she had with Sally. Flowers are the reminder, that familiar and unfamiliar sign, in Clarissa’s life that cause her so much anxiety and loneliness, yet at the same time inspire a desire within her. Clarissa’s old Aunt Helena is a representative of an older, more conservative time. Aunt Helena found Sally improper; she finds Sally’s treatment of flowers shocking being that flowers are traditionally a feminine symbol. Sally deals with the flowers in a different way than the norm. Sally’s snipping off of the heads of flowers can also be seen as symbolizing her allure to other women, Clarissa in particular. Flowers are a motif in the novel, and they serve as sign of femininity, as well as of societal romance. Further, when Richard heard that Peter Walsh has returned, he brings his wife flowers in order to show her how much he loves her: “But he wanted to come in holding something. Flowers? Yes, flowers” (15). He never expresses his love in words, and because he has this trite notion of romance, he thinks that flowers will assure her of his love. Here, flowers and the meaning they hold stand for Clarissa and her sexuality, are used for proprietary and formal love.

Sally allowed Clarissa to see the world past England, past Burton, past society, and past what she has known her whole life. Stylistically, the novel has no breaks and goes from past to present inconsistently, which shows the fluidity of sexuality and identity in the novel. It also shows how the past and future continually infringe upon and restructure the present. Clarissa is attempting to reconcile past traumas by constructing a present for herself in order to have a more fulfilled future. The reader sees the struggle and the loss of sexual pleasure and desire in Clarissa

through the recount of what happened between her and Sally. The benefit to having such a fluid narrative is that the reader is able to see the change in Clarissa in a less than linear fashion. The present-day Clarissa disapproves of Sally and dismisses the feeling she had towards her: “No the words meant absolutely nothing to her now. She could not even get an echo of her old emotion. But she could remember going cold with excitement and doing her hair in a kind of ecstasy” (34). Now, the reader can see how radical and passionate Clarissa was when she was young, highlighting just how conventional she has become with Richard in her adult life. Clarissa expresses the truest emotions towards Sally, describing her as radiant, with overpowering charm. In turning away from this love and marrying Richard, Clarissa represses her instincts and turns to the substitutive satisfaction of filling her role as a “perfect hostess” (7). Her inner self presents itself as fragmented and complex and Clarissa uses her social role to unite her image.

Woolf uses the symbol of the flower and the presence of the gloves in order to illuminate the femininity within her work. She also uses the prose of the novel, which is poetic and fluid, to convey how women differ from men when it comes to time and narrative form. Cixous starts off her essay “The Newly Born Woman” with the concept of binary oppositions. She explains that when speaking of any opposites in language, one word is always seen as more valued than the other, such as with sex and gender. Cixous explains bisexuality as both sides of this sort of binary opposition. Cixous sees writing as “the passageway, the entrance, the exit, and the dwelling place of another in me” (352). Because men are socialized to fear having a feminine identity placed on themselves, they limit their writing potentials. Femininity and bisexuality go hand in hand, and they allow the woman to express herself in the ways men cannot. The concept and the power of “écriture feminine,” feminine writing, is proven in Cixous’s essay. Cixous describes feminine writing as all-encompassing and infinite. Women

have embraced the unknown and have let “the other come in” which has led them to writing texts that differ from those of males. The woman “refuses life nothing”; the woman keeps changing and keeps moving forward (353).

Men are stuck in this “ideological theater” where the social contrasts of who they think they should be encompasses who they can/want to be (350). Cixous then brings in the term phallogocentric, which is a mixture of both logocentrism and phallogocentrism. Logocentrism is the idea that at the center is logic and reason, and phallogocentrism is the relation between power and man. Through this, Cixous explains the mindset in which men write and how this logic-centered style differs from a woman’s writing. Woolf uses this type of writing and is able to inhabit the other in order to explore these unknown parts of the human mind. This is most clearly seen in her ability to write internal narratives for both Clarissa and Septimus. In moments such as these, the connection between *Mrs. Dalloway* and *Lolita* is seen. While Woolf is able to embrace the other, Nabokov is unable to voice Lolita’s trauma as well as he does with Humbert’s. Although there are a few moments where her voice does come out, Nabokov is not as open to the “other” as Woolf is. By utilizing this bi-voice Woolf creates a dynamic in Clarissa that wouldn’t otherwise exist.

Clarissa’s narrative is shared with Septimus Warren, who suffers from severe PTSD. He is defined by the experiences he faced as a soldier and cannot escape it. The only way he thinks he can escape this “other” is by dying, and his failed attempt at suicide shows how far he is willing to go. The fact that Septimus needs a physical action in addition to his emotional turmoil shows the reader that men, in this sense, cannot base themselves outside this ideological theater and they need physicality because they fear the unknown. Septimus sees his problem, identifies a logical solution, and acts on it. Septimus’ physicality and emotional capacity are dependent on

each other. In her article “Reinventing Grief Work: Virginia Woolf’s Feminist Representations of Mourning in *Mrs. Dalloway* and *To the Lighthouse*,” Susan Bennett Smith argues that Septimus is a sacrifice for Clarissa, and that he had to die in order for her to live. She argues that Septimus and Clarissa both are going through a time of bereavement, but they handle it in different ways. Septimus has “internalized an excess of stoicism from the in the Great War, he reacts by expressing grief in self-abnegation. Men, especially soldiers, don’t cry... Septimus’s own way out is suicide” (313). Clarissa and Septimus both are struggling to maintain this façade and also to find stability in this changing world. Lois Tyson explains the term “death drive” from “Beyond the Pleasure Principle” as Freud’s attempt “to account for the alarming degree of self destructive behavior he saw... [people] who seemed bent on destroying themselves psychologically if not physically” (22). Septimus is in the physical world, so his death drive is rooted in his desire to uncover the unknown of life after death. However, the death drive is not exclusive to just Septimus because he killed himself. It exists for Clarissa in the mental world, rather than the physical. Clarissa and Septimus both harbor this fear of death, but with Clarissa this death drive is “often responsible... for fear of intimacy” (23). Clarissa’s desire is that she wants to revisit the past in order to feel that intimacy again, yet she fears the unknown repercussions if she acts on her desire. Even though these characters serve as doubles, the way in which they deal with trauma fundamentally differs. Septimus’s infliction of trauma stems from the war, while Clarissa’s started on that day with Sally and has since been growing.

Similarly, Peter Walsh’s narrative is also limited; he is unable to articulate himself, which is why he is always carrying and sharpening his knife. He needs a physical reminder of his manhood and of his power over nature, because he is struggling to reenter the society he had left behind. Both Septimus and Peter need physical actions in addition to their narratives, because

they are stuck in this physical world and cannot escape or face the unknown. Peter Walsh serves as a reminder to Clarissa of her sexuality, while also showing the reader the identity that men force onto women. Peter is constantly making remarks about Clarissa, saying that she is “the perfect hostess... she had cried over it in her bedroom, she had the makings of a perfect hostess, he said” (7). Here we see that a man is always telling a woman who she is and ought to be. For Peter, and most of society at that time, a woman is either maternal – a cookie-cutter woman – or against the tide. For men, there was no woman that could have both the “angel” side and the “devil” side; they could only exist in the static way they have created her. Peter reprimands Clarissa for marrying Richard, but at the same time wonders if he himself is still in love with her. After leaving the Dalloway house, he passes by a young woman and thinks, “to shed veil after veil, until she became the very woman he had always had in mind; young, but stately; merry, but discreet; black, but enchanting” (52). Here we see the contradictions in what a man expects from a woman; she can’t be a prude, but she cannot be a whore. A woman must embody both conflicting traits in order to be considered the perfect woman, and yet man’s mind is only capable of categorizing a woman as either worthy or not.

Peter loses interest in Clarissa because she is offended when someone brings up the idea of premarital sex. He doesn’t blame Clarissa for her reaction, but he recalls that moment as the “death of her soul” (59). Peter expects so much of Clarissa and ultimately sees through her façade. But his insight makes Clarissa insecure and uncomfortable, because her hidden trauma is now becoming known to her. She knows that he is judging what she does and who she is, and even though she enjoys his adventurous nature, she is accustomed to a more stable way of life. In “The Woman in the Attic: Sexuality and Self-Authorship in *Mrs. Dalloway*,” Jesse Wolfe argues that Peter is an oppressive character in Clarissa’s life, while Richard provides her with more

individual freedom. “Unlike Sally’s love—a passing phase of late-adolescent lesbian enthusiasm—Richard’s lasts, albeit in its feebler, clumsier way. Unlike Peter’s love, Richard’s is not oppressive. It provides Clarissa with space, both physically (a room and ominously narrow bed of her own) and mentally? (in which to work through her problems, to live a private life)” (3). She has the physical connection with Sally and the intellectual with Peter, but Richard provides her with the stability she requires. This sense of stability is the most important to Clarissa, because she lives in a post-war society, which lacks balance. She loves him dearly, and it seems that they have the most solid relationship out of everyone in this novel. This also posits the idea that in this novel sexuality is a lonely experience, and real desire will never come into fruition. This article shows that the most stable relationship is also the most proper, and the most proper is the least sexual.

By utilizing this bi-voice, Woolf creates a dynamic in Clarissa and within the text. The concept of time in this novel, or lack of it, seems to also harbor this interconnected quality. While reading the novel, time seems ambiguous; the characters travel back and forth between time and place. However, the Big Ben striking the passing hours allows the reader and the characters to reenter the novel in a certain time and place when necessary. Woolf explores the anxiety that comes when someone is forced to reevaluate their identity and is faced with their biggest regret. Starting off the novel with Clarissa’s reassertion for not only her independence, but her sexuality, the reader is placed almost instantly into a mind that is struggling to break free. By using a bi-narrative Woolf is able to explore the identities of men as well as woman, giving the novel a more well-rounded and encompassing nature. Her poetic prose allows the reader to get a full-minded image of every character, which span different genders, ages, and nationalities. By using the metaphor of the flower Woolf shows both the natural and formal aspects of love

and desire. She uses memory as a tool to invoke desire and regret in Clarissa, and many of the other characters living in this time.

Vladimir Nabokov's attempt to write trauma differs from Woolf's in that his work does not have the subtlety and amplitude of Woolf's "écriture feminine." Woolf uses her work to highlight the ways in which men try to contain woman and female sexuality, evident in characters like Peter Walsh. Nabokov uses a male narrative to describe female sexuality as promiscuous in order to frame Humbert's narrative in a more favorable light. Gender plays into how each of these authors write about trauma of the opposite sex. Due to the fact that Woolf is able to access this bi-voice, she is able to depict Septimus and his trauma as well as Clarissa's. Nabokov's novel is stuck in this ideological theatre and all the females in this novel struggle to find voices and identities. As readers, the trauma of *Lolita* is both "known" and "unknown". The obvious trauma—Humbert's relationship with her—is "known" but what is not written is the trauma Lolita went through after she left Humbert, and her narrative while she was with him. Both Woolf and Nabokov use memory as a tool to uncover the unknown trauma of their characters. Memory, like the uncanny, is triggered by an object that brings a wave of nostalgia. *Lolita* brings to light the darker aspects of a society and the darker motives within an individual. Nabokov's style of writing and his use of prose, repetition, and symbolism make it a uniquely woven story. Nabokov takes one of the most immoral and repulsive acts and writes in it such a way that the reader is intrigued, rather than repulsed.

Harold Bloom argues that Nabokov's poetic prose "avoids incurring our moral resentment by the exuberance of his language, with its zest for access" (2). Bloom is claiming that because the novel itself is written in such a beautiful way and the language is so poetic, the reader is blind to the actuality of the plot. Instead of viewing Humbert's narrative as

abhorrent, the reader has fallen in love with the language. In an essay appended to *Lolita*, Nabokov delves into his technique and inspiration for the novel. He does not want *Lolita* to be “didactic fiction” or a story of morality and society. For Nabokov, a work of fiction “exists only insofar as it affords me what I shall call aesthetic bliss, that is a sense of being somehow, somewhere connected with other states of being where art... is the norm” (315). *Lolita* is not exclusively a pornographic novel, nor is it a detective novel. It transcends genre by allowing the words and the form to override content. Edmund White describes his novel as a parody, not only of romance, but “parodies of literary essays, of scholarly lists of sources, of scientific treatises, of psychiatric reports, and especially of the confession and the legal defense” (215). In this novel, Nabokov debunks the idea of what a known “sane narrative” should look like, by grounding the story in a plausible setting with a sympathetic protagonist.

In order to fully delve into the novel, one must ask—What is madness, and where is its place in literature? According to Shoshana Felman in her work *Writing and Madness*, literature “communicates with madness: through reliable and unreliable narrators” (4). Is Humbert a reliable narrator? Thomas Frosch points to Humbert’s description of himself as “an artist and a madman, a creature of infinite melancholy” (133). There is a thin line between madness and creativity. Nabokov is writing this novel at the height of popularity of clinical psychiatry. As Felman argues, literature comes and “challenges this [psychiatry] power, gives refuge and expression to what is socially or medically repressed, objectified, unauthorized, denied, and silenced. Literature becomes the only recourse for the self-expression and the self-representation of the mad” (4). This genre of the madman claiming a narrative, and then imposing this madness on another is seen in *Lolita*. Humbert is self-aware and eloquent which is seen when he says, “When I try to analyze my own cravings, motives, actions and so forth, I surrender to a sort of

retrospective imagination which feeds the analytic faculty with boundless alternatives... each route forks and re-forks without end to the maddeningly complex prospect of my past” (*Lolita* 13). Humbert realizes that each moment that occurred, or did not occur, in his life has led him up to this point. He acknowledges the myriad of ways in which his life could have gone in the first few lines of the novel when he states, “In point of fact, there might have been no Lolita at all had I not loved, one summer, a certain initial girl-child” (9). We understand that Humbert suffered a trauma as a child which led him to a position where he is now the traumatizer. In this instance the narrative of trauma comes into view as Humbert declares that the only reason there is a Lolita is that he experienced trauma previously. Lolita is written into the narrative as a repercussion to an earlier event, and her existence in this form stems (at least from Humbert’s perspective) from this one moment of time.

In these moments of self-awareness and clarity Humbert does not seem like an unreliable narrator. However, this novel is Humbert’s testimony which epitomizes the idea of a narrative written as “self-expression and self-representation” as a sanctuary for madness. Felman sees these works of literature that are categorized as “mad” as “an ironic mirror to the madness of the world and as a critique of normative behaviors” (4). Nabokov’s novel sheds a light on pedophilia, which is one of the most taboo topics in society. It gives a narrative to the both the traumatized and the traumatizer; as Felman argues, “Literature narrates the silence of the mad as it narrates the silence of the trauma” (6). What does Felman mean when she says “silence?” Doesn’t the entire idea of narrating silence seem like an oxymoron? What Felman is saying is that no author is able to fully articulate trauma because of its silent nature, so they must find an indirect way to depict it. The madman, because he is necessarily unreliable, is never given the ability to articulate his madness stemming from a trauma. The trauma that was inflicted

on Humbert, and then on Lolita, is never explicitly written. Instead, Humbert uses metaphors in order to explain his trauma which is seen in the “tangle of thorns” (9). Humbert is using this image in order to show how trauma intertwines itself throughout the narrative. Each character—each branch of thorns is tangled into one novel, and one story. In the moments of desire, in particular the scene in which Humbert is masturbating while Lolita’s legs are on him, Humbert writes that he has “safely solopsized” her (60). The use of the word “safely” means that Humbert thinks that he is not inflicting any trauma onto Lolita. He has not only written her into safety and immortality but also writes himself off for any wrongdoing. Lolita is trapped in the words of the novel, just like she is trapped in Humbert’s mind; according to Elizabeth Bruss, he “bends all his physical and narrative efforts to confining her to the private kingdom of his dreams” (45). In this moment the terrorization and trauma that is happening is unknown to Lolita. She exists at this point of the novel only in the pages of his notebooks and in his mind.

In analyzing the underlying terms of unreliable narrative, Felman looks into “(t)he pathos of repetition... which is lyrical in writing, hallucinatory in life—is the shadow of a love impossible to live, and the figure of the woman as fundamentally lost, incarnating the return of death within life” (266). Although here Felman is describing a different novel, this representation of madness applies to Nabokov’s work. The repetition of images and phrases is not just a prose choice -- it is a cathartic experience for both the character and author. The first words of the novel are the repetition of Lolita’s name,

Lolita, light of my life, fire of my loins... Lo-lee-ta... Lo. Lee. Ta... She was Lo, plain Lo, in the morning standing four feet ten in one sock, she was Lola in slacks, she was Dolly at school. She was Dolores on the dotted line. But in my arms, she was always Lolita. (9)

The repetition of Lolita's name and the various forms in which she was known to Humbert harbors this "shadow of a love impossible to live" because Lolita is dead at this point in the novel. Through repetition Humbert is bringing Lolita back to life. Humbert is haunted by Annabel and their unfulfilled moment and he is also haunted by the repetition of his own words. Nabokov addresses the irony of the notion of reliable narrative when Humbert says, "You can always count on a murderer for a fancy prose style" (9). Here he is explicitly addressing the jury as Nabokov breaks down the fourth wall between narrator and reader.

The language of trauma is not only in the discourse of the novel, or in symbols or imagery. The actual language, English, is also put under investigation. Humbert says a lot in French and encourages Lolita to use the language as well. Lolita also knows to use the French language when she is in trouble or wants something, "*c'est entendu?*" ... Used French only when she was a very good little girl" (207). In his essay "Parody and Authenticity in *Lolita*," Thomas R. Frosch articulates "Humbert's old-world, European manner— aristocratic, starchy, and genteel— set in a brassy America of motels and movie magazines, and in his formal, elegant style of speaking posed against Lolita's slang" (133). By using French, a language that has set Humbert apart (and in his mind, above) the other characters, Lolita is diminishing Humbert's ego and stripping him of his elitism. She is slipping into his discourse, using his native language in order to get what she wants. Here Lolita's narrative barely emerges because even though she is manipulating language to control Humbert, she is using his words and his language to do so. Before Lolita knows that her mother is dead she pokes fun of his desire for her and names what they are doing: "the word is incest" (119). Here is a direct yet fleeting verbalization of Lolita's trauma, an example of her limited narrative.

The withholding of Lolita's narrative is a powerful idea and is seen in Cathy Caruth's work "Unclaimed Experience", which highlights the silence of trauma. In her Introduction Caruth argues that silence in a narrative

is this plea by another who is asking to be seen and heard, this call by which the other commands us to awaken.... And in these books understanding, constitutes the new mode of reading and of listening that both the language of trauma, and the silence of its mute repetition of suffering, profoundly and imperatively demand. (9)

Carruth pleads with the reader to pay attention to the ways in which Lolita is able to write her trauma in between the lines of Humbert's narrative. The idea of "mute repetition" is contrasted with the excessive verbal repetition of Humbert's narrative and elevates Lolita and her limited narrative. The "mute repetition of suffering" is constant throughout the novel and is shown in instances when Humbert calls Lolita a "slave child", "pubescent concubine," and in his description of their time together as a "session of adoration and despair" (148, 188). Humbert is given the means to speak and write, which was denied to Lolita at the start of the novel. Lolita is in a constant state of trauma as Humbert takes her around America inflicting himself upon her. While Humbert and Lolita are on the road she says, "If", she repeated, "You don't have a pencil, but are old enough to read and write— this is what the guy means, isn't it, you dope— scratch the number somehow on the roadside" (166). There is a desperation to Lolita's words in which her only hope of escaping is to somehow leave a sign of her existence. The physical attributes of language are her only means of escape and freedom. The unknown narrative of Lolita needs to be read within the lines of Humbert's account. In moments like these, the connection between Clarissa and Lolita is strongly seen. Clarissa does not want to contain the past like Humbert wants to contain Lolita. Clarissa and Lolita both desire the freedom to express themselves in new

ways— whether it be sexually or linguistically. In both of their narratives the desire to claim an identity within a master male narrative is seen.

Part Two of the novel provides a deeper look into Lolita's narrative and role as a narrator of experience than Part One. What both *Lolita* and *Mrs. Dalloway* share is that they are both title—novels and both named after women. Woolf, with her ability to utilize a bi-voice, is able to describe the trauma of both Septimus and Clarissa. Nabokov, however, is unable to fully narrate *Lolita*, because he does not occupy the space of a little girl. In turn, *Lolita* is a novel in which the narrative of Lolita is hidden and contained within a larger and more masculine narrative. The novel also stages the disappearance of Lolita from Humbert's dominant narrative. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, the word *Lolita* is "(u)sed to designate people and situations resembling those in the novel *Lolita*, in which a precocious schoolgirl is seduced by a middle-aged man". Even in the wording of the definition, and word "precocious" and "seduced" evoke that this relationship was wanted. Lolita was not seduced by Humbert—Humbert has control of the narrative so he provides the reader with the scenario that flatters himself. When they last meet, Humbert tries to get Lolita back, and he states, "she groped for words. I supplied them mentally (*He* [Quilty] broke my heart. *You* merely broke my life)" (279). In the last few pages of the novel, Humbert realizes that the notion of his and Lolita's love was a fantasy. She loved another, and got impregnated by another man, which highlights the unnatural union of her and Humbert. Lolita did not fall under the seduction of Humbert— she fell for Quilty. This idea correlates to Caruth's statement of knowing and unknowing because throughout the novel the reader and Humbert are unaware of Lolita and her relationship with Quilty.

Throughout the second part of the novel Humbert does not know where Lolita is, or how she even got in contact with Quilty. The traps that Lolita and Quilty set for Humbert is as

meandering a mind game as the one he has played on Lolita which he describes as, “so cunningly contrived as to never reveal a common denominator” (251). This chase is one of the ways in which Lolita exercises her voice and makes herself legible within the text. The chase which has Humbert “groping in a border-land mist with verbal phantoms” is the only part of the novel in which time moves quickly (251). Much like in *Mrs. Dalloway*, Part One of *Lolita* is slow, going into an almost day-by-day account of Humbert’s life. But once Lolita escapes, years pass in an instant. Humbert has now become the player in his own game, with Lolita and Quilty narrating his own confession. The use of the words “verbal phantoms” encompasses the idea of the language of trauma. Humbert is chasing nothing material and this “paper trail” exists in his mind as much as it does on the paper. Lolita finds her voice through theatre as well, which retroactively shows how good she was at acting for Humbert. The play, much like the paper trail, was an elaborate ruse made by Quilty and Lolita on Humbert. Even the plot of the play was aimed to poke fun at Humbert, “the play’s profound message, namely, that mirage and reality merge in love” (201). This is how Quilty sees Humbert’s infatuation with Lolita—merely that she resembles Annabel but exists in the real world, so he must be in love with her. While on their second road trip Lolita recollects something that she used to do with her mother. Humbert notes, “it was the first time, I think, she spoke spontaneously of her pre-Humbertian childhood; perhaps, the theatre had taught her that trick” (219). Through acting Lolita was able to access who she was before Humbert and her trauma. The use of the word ‘trick’ shows that this recollection of Lolita’s innocent and non-traumatic childhood is deliberate because it makes Humbert uncomfortable. Lolita, unlike Humbert uses different art forms in order to relay her story. Humbert uses writing, but Lolita uses theatre, wisecracks, innocent recollections, and the clues from the car chase in order to emerge as a narrative force within the novel.

When Humbert receives the letter from Lolita he remarks, “an alien handwriting had twisted it into a semblance of Lolita’s script” (263). He has been separated from her for so long that her handwriting has become foreign to him, and from the use of the word “twisted” he sees this change as a deformation. Lolita has matured and has developed her own handwriting in addition to her voice and freedom. Once Humbert knows what had happened to the now “Dolly’s Schiller” and her account and letter, he is able to fully confront Quilty. In these moments Lolita is coming out from the shadows and transitioning into becoming “known”. The absence of Lolita’s voice that the reader can see throughout the novel is only uncovered to Humbert in the last page of the novel. While he is looking out into a field, and “heard but the melody of children at play,” Humbert realizes, “And then I knew that the hopelessly poignant thing was not Lolita’s absence from my side, but the absence of her voice from that concord” (308). Humbert was infatuated with Lolita in the physical sense, and never bothered to listen to her or educate her. Her voice has been unknown to him from the very start of the novel. Only at the end does he realize that he has taken away her childhood, and that her voice was never able to be in this “melody”.

The novel is set up by push back on the effects of trauma and parody the modern psychiatric notion of the “talking cure.” Freud, and many others, believe that when analysts talk they realize their issues and figure them out through a verbal therapy. This novel which was almost titled “Confession of a White Widowed Male,” is a verbatim account of the trauma that both Humbert and Lolita suffered (3). By making Humbert’s narrative a confessional, Nabokov is poking fun at those who will read this as a case study. Humbert’s physical narrative, the actual pages of his confession, legitimize his trauma and the one inflicted on Lolita. Charlotte Haze, Lolita’s mother, is also denied a narrative within this story. When she finds Humbert’s journal

with its detailed accounts of Lolita, she “went on writing in a scorching scrawl” three letters, one of which is addressed to Lolita (96). These letters were handed to Humbert when Charlotte dies, and he “got rid of them by clawing them to fragments in my trouser pocket” (98). The only attempt and the only person that knows the truth has their narrative literally ripped from their dead hand and ripped to shreds. Nabokov is showing that writing or verbalizing a trauma does not cure it, it just makes it known.

The scraps of Charlotte’s letter provide an image of shattering within the text, which is dominated by Humbert who does not seem to have a shattered voice. However, Humbert’s madness is seen in the parentheticals of the text, which fragment the seemingly flowing narrative. The parentheticals are essential while looking at a narrative for trauma. In these self-contained sentences, Humbert is allowed to escape the elevated language of the novel and enter into a space in which he can write freely. What these parentheses provide the reader with is not just a respite from the novel, but a glimpse into the mind of the traumatizer and the traumatized. What lies beneath these structures are the key to the novel, and in the very omitting of them within the grander scheme of things, there is the most repression. The first and most important use of the parenthesis is seen when Humbert is talking about his mother’s death, in which he only writes “(picnic, lightning)” (2). This first use shows that as a narrator, Humbert is going to omit stories that do not particularly pertain to his current situation. The reader never gets to find out the trauma that Humbert’s mother endured or how this trauma affected Humbert. The prose represses it but limiting the entire scenario into two words. In her essay “Illusions of Reality and the Reality of Illusions,” Elizabeth Bruss sees these “brief parentheses puncture the most elevated and grandiose expression, deflating formal beauty with crude actuality” (32). For Bruss, Humbert is not the eloquent narrator he seems to be, and this fragmentation comes out when

recounting painful situations, which can be seen when he recounts his mother's death. As opposed to Woolf, whose prose was for the most part uninterrupted, Nabokov inserts frequent outbursts of emotion and fragmentation. Woolf goes into Clarissa's past, while Humbert's is quickly written and never explained.

While looking at Humbert through a psychoanalytic lens, one sees that he has experienced a trauma that remains unsolved. When Humbert was thirteen he fell in love with Annabel, who was twelve at the time. Their relationship grew, and they attempted to consummate many times as Humbert humorously recollects. But, there was one instance when Humbert was "at the point of possessing my darling" when two bathers interrupted the tryst, and Annabel died four months later (10). This interrupted moment between Annabel and Humbert stunted his growth and was a "permanent obstacle to any further romance throughout the cold years of my [Humbert] youth" (14). Kolk and McFarlane, in their essay "The Black Hole of Trauma," say that most people can go through life "without becoming haunted by the memories of what has happened to them" (489). But this is not the case for Humbert. While recollecting his unsuccessful relationship with Annabel, Humbert admits that "the ache remained with me... that little girl with her seaside limbs and ardent tongue haunted me ever since" (15). Humbert tries to go through life, but he is stuck on this unfulfilled moment he had on a beach 24 years ago. Kolk and McFarlane explain PTSD as "the result of a failure of time to heal all wounds" (491). The fact that Humbert, even after all this time, cannot get over Annabel's death is exactly what the definition of the disorder is. Humbert says, "but the poison was in the wound, and the wound remained ever open" (Nabokov 18), both Nabokov and Kolk and McFarlane are using the same word, "wound" in order to describe an ailment. Humbert has not moved passed the humiliation he felt when he was interrupted and is still traumatized from the death of his love.

Humbert uses Lolita and Annabel interchangeably; he uses their names in the same paragraph, even in the same sentence. Annabel is the “prototype for Lolita, and her death is the reason Humbert is infatuated with young girls (40). He will be in a moment with Lolita, and midsentence would say “she smelt almost exactly like the other one, the Riviera one” (42). Annabel was Humbert’s equal at the time, and since they never consummated he is stuck in his childhood desires. He compares Annabel and Lolita as “two kinds of visual memory” (11), Annabel as a “memory he can skillfully recreate”, and Lolita as one that is “the objective, absolutely optical replica” (11). Both are different sides of the same coin, and Humbert flips between them whenever he wants. The moment when Humbert first sees Lolita he says, “then, without the least warning...there was my Riviera love peering at me over dark glasses. It was the same child” (39). Humbert is constantly comparing Lolita “against the features of my dead bride” (39). He does not see them as two separate people in two separate times and moments, for him “everything they shared made one of them” (40). Humbert tries to make Lolita play tennis, something he and Annabel did when they spent the summer together. Humbert assumes that anything Annabel likes, Lolita was bound to like as well, but she hates to play tennis. Humbert doesn’t realize that Lolita isn’t Annabel, and that she is a merely a stand in for her.

Lolita and Humbert relationship is physical, and they have no real conversations—“whenever I tried to discuss something she and an older friend, she and a parent, she and a real healthy sweetheart, I and Annabel, Lolita and a sublime...might have discussed an abstract idea—God or Shakespeare... she would mail her vulnerability in trite brashness and boredom” (284). In these sentences we see that Humbert still pairs himself with Annabel and still sees her as an equal. It also shows that Lolita was just a little girl; she wasn’t anything special or unique. She was merely a child and was the physical manifestation and fulfillment of Humbert’s infantile

wish. What this excerpt shows is the obliteration of Lolita's voice, and Humbert's inability to communicate with her. Through language, or the lack of language the illusion of what Lolita was becomes known to Humbert which can be seen when he says, "Mentally, I found her to be a disgustingly conventional little girl" (148). She only possessed what Humbert physically wanted, but mentally she provided no stimulation for him.

However, to read *Lolita* as a serious testament to psychoanalysis would be wrong because Nabokov deliberately places these concepts within the text as a source of parody. Nabokov writes, "Although everybody should know that I detest symbols and allegories (which is due to my old feud with Freudian voodooism)" (314). The ideas of the infantile wish, repression, and the double that was held up in Woolf's novel is uprooted in Nabokov's. The image the holds the most parody and deliberate call out of psychoanalysis in the novel is Humbert's pistol, "we must remember that a pistol is the Freudian symbol of the Ur-father's central forelimb" (216). The sexualized image of the gun is seen again after Lolita tells Humbert about her time with Quilty. In this scene Humbert imagines killing Quilty, "pulled the pistol's foreskin back, and then enjoyed the orgasm of the crushed trigger: I was always a good little follower of the Viennese medicine man" (274). The "Viennese medicine man" is a direct correlation to Freud, and the overexaggerating of the pistol as a phallic symbol is a parody of psychoanalysis. Although the novel harbors many psychoanalytic ideas, it also is blatant in its skepticism towards the field.

In Freud's essay *The Uncanny* he says that repression turns into "morbid anxieties", and these anxieties reoccur when the adult is put back into his or her own repressed infantile fears (489). In this essay Freud brings in ETA Hoffman's *The Sandman* in order to further prove his point. This story contains repression, castration anxiety, and infantile fear. But the most interesting part is when Freud speaks about the infantile wish, which is seen in the automaton

Clara. Nathaniel falls in love with the automaton, because she is his infantile wish. Freud writes that “the “idea of a living doll” excited no fear at all; children have no fear of their doll coming to life, they may even desire it” (425). While putting this into the context of *Lolita*, Lolita can be seen as the automaton, the living doll. She is the infantile wish of Humbert and is his second chance of fulfilling what he has waited to do for years. Nabokov, who vehemently disliked modern psychoanalytic thought, and in particular Freud, puts little jabs to psychiatry throughout the novel. Humbert addresses the modern psychiatrist, who “is no doubt anxious to have me take my Lolita to the seaside, and have me find there, at last, the “gratification” of a lifetime urge, and a release from the “subconscious” obsession of an incomplete childhood romance” (166–7). Humbert doesn’t need to have sex with Lolita on a beach in order to fulfill his infantile wish. Humbert says it himself that his “real liberation” came from the moment he saw Lolita, the moment she was standing in her backyard by a little pool– the moment he thought she and Annabel were the same girl (167). The uncanny feeling, he felt when he saw her, achieved through what Freud termed repetition-compulsion– led him to ascribe Lolita as the reincarnation of his lost love.

In Freud’s Sandman example, when Nathaniel sees Coppola rip the doll’s eyes out he falls into a fit of insanity, because he is confronted with his infantile fear. In the case of *Lolita*, Humbert is not faced with his infantile fear, but with his infantile wish–and therefore when he is confronted with it, he falls into a pit of desire. In the opening paragraph of the novel, Humbert says directly “In a point of fact, there might have been no Lolita at all had I not loved one summer, a certain initial girl-child” (9). In other worlds, had Humbert consummated with Annabel, had he physically expressed his love for her, he wouldn’t feel the need to do it as an older man. Had his wish been granted and not interrupted he would’ve moved passed it. He

makes Annabel into almost a mythical being, much like Woolf did with Sally, and even though she is not physically there, her influence, and her presence in Humbert's mind is the driving force in the novel. These otherworldly attributes that Humbert gives Annabel is seen when he says, "I broke her [Annabel's] spell, by incarnating her in another" (15). By using the word *spell*, Humbert is implying that Annabel has a supernatural element to her being, and the only way to get break her spell is to find her in another.

There are many doubles for Humbert in this novel—Clare Quilty, Nabokov, and Humbert himself all serve as doubles— who show the many facets that make up Humbert as a whole character. Clare Quilty is one of the most interesting parts of the novel, because he is a physical reminder to Humbert about his doings, and he serves as one of his doubles. Quilty shows up discreetly throughout the novel, almost as a spectator to the events coming along. The first time Quilty is introduced, it is in "a dazzling coincidence that logicians loathe and poets love" which is an ironic statement on the part of Nabokov (31). Humbert is reading a book about up and coming playwrights and Quilty is listed there along with all of his plays. In this one paragraph all three doubles (Quilty, Humbert, and Nabokov) are shown. The titles of his plays hold meaning, one being *Little Nymph*, the word Humbert uses to describe Lolita, the girl both Quilty and Humbert wanted. The other play, who's name can be seen as Humbert's own double, is *The Lady Who Loved Lightning*, which holds meaning for Humbert because his mother died when she was struck by lightning at a picnic. And the third double, can be seen when Nabokov places himself in the list, using the actress Vivian Darkbloom as an anagram for his own name. Quilty is seen again when Humbert is in Lolita's room, and sees a picture of him on her wall, and notes, "the resemblance was slight" (69). He, like Humbert, is attracted to little girls, and particularly Lolita. He a looming presence and is always a step ahead of Humbert

waiting for him to arrive. When Humbert pulls up to a hotel parking lot with Lolita he “noticed that my predecessor had now taken advantage of a garage like shelter...but I was too impatient to follow his example” (117). Quilty was already at the hotel in which Humbert and Lolita first have sex, before Humbert himself arrives.

While speaking about the idea of the double, Freud says “there are also all those unfulfilled but possible futures to which we still like to cling in phantasy” (426). While looking at Quilty through a Freudian perspective, he is the perfect double because he is a reflection of Humbert’s inner self and provides Humbert a glimpse into a world and life he wants for himself. Throughout the novel, Humbert tries to disassociate himself with Quilty, unaware that he and Quilty are two plies of the same fabric. But right before Humbert is about to murder him he finally admits to their intrinsic connection describing their final connection as, “he rolled over me. I rolled over him. We rolled over me. They rolled over him. We rolled over us” (299). In this final moment, Humbert changes the narrative and makes Quilty and himself interchangeable, finally admitting to himself their connection. Quilty can be seen as Humbert himself, or as an evil doppelganger of Humbert that must be destroyed. In their final encounter, after the murder has been carried out, it could be seen that good won evil. But is either of them truly good? Are they both the two sides of the same person? In the last paragraph of the novel, Humbert says “And do not pit C.Q. One had to choose between him and H.H, and one wanted H.H. to exist” (309). This sentence is interesting because it brings in the idea that both of these men cannot coexist in the same place. When Humbert kills Quilty, he says “This, I said to myself, was the end of the ingenious play staged for me by Quilty” (305). Quilty has been present throughout the novel, without the knowledge of Humbert and unknown to the reader. Again, the “unknowing” of the narrative is seen and is only known at the end of the novel. The relationship

between Quilty and Humbert is not one-sided. Both use each other as doubles, in a symbiotic relationship feeding off each other's lives at the expense of a little girl.

In her article, "*Lolita and the Genre of the Literary Double: Does Quilty Exist?*" Priscilla Meyer brings in the notion that Clare Quilty may be a product of Humbert's hallucinations (5). Meyers argues that Quilty is shadow of the inner part of Humbert that he has tried too hard to repress, and that "Quilty, whom Humbert depicts as a shameless pornographer and second-rate playwright, embodies the pedophilic lust Humbert tries to deny, while travestyng Humbert's vision of himself as artist" (8). Just like Lolita was the physical manifestation of Humbert's infantile wish, Quilty can be seen as the physical manifestation of Humbert's id. Humbert won't admit that he is as bad as Quilty because he sees himself as an artist. What is ironic is that at the end, Lolita picks Quilty over Humbert. Lolita loved Quilty and says, "he was the only man she had ever been crazy about" (272). However, even though Quilty physically gets Lolita's body and heart, Humbert through the art of writing this memoir, has made both he and Lolita immortal. Even though Humbert has made Lolita's narrative unknown, by immortalizing her she becomes known.

In his introduction to Nabokov's work, Bloom states that the whole Part Two of *Lolita* is an "involuntary repetition of the "pleasure." The death drive, fueled by that negative libido... takes over poor Humbert completely, through the agency of his dark double and despoiler, Clare Quilty... All Part Two of *Lolita* becomes, not a parody, but a Freudian allegory" (3). The metaphor for the death drive, is that Humbert and Lolita are actually driving around America in their car. This "drive" is fueled by Humbert's desire. The drive itself happens two times within the novel. The repetition of the drive, which is an exact replica of the first, stems from the idea of the death drive. Peter Brooks in his essay "Freud's Master Plot" states that "repetition is a

primary event, independent of the pleasure principle and more primitive” (289). Humbert, in an attempt to reconnect to Lolita and return to the state of bliss of their first road trip is repeating the drive. However, this time Lolita says that “*this* we’ll go wherever *I* want,” (207) which retroactively read is the first step in her escaping Humbert. As they drive, Humbert desperately tries to recreate the first trip, but at the end it has morphed into a “grotesque journey” (229). For Brooks, it is not the conventional “death drive” that is motivating Humbert, but the need to repeat.

What Woolf’s and Nabokov’s works present is an attempt to articulate trauma and characters that use trauma in order to form their identities. Although each of the authors relationship with psychoanalysis differs, it is important that Freud and his theories be presented within a reading of the texts. Freud and his psychoanalytic theories such as the uncanny, repetition, and the double provide the ability for an in depth reading of these works. The uncanny in particular is an important essay while reading both of these works, because both have the “unfamiliar” sign that shows up throughout the texts. In the case of *Mrs. Dalloway*, it is the flowers, and in the case of *Lolita* is the reincarnation of Annabel through Lolita. The idea of unknowing and knowing is central to this argument because the space between is where the trauma is seen. For Woolf, the trauma that Clarissa went through when she was younger is an unknown trauma. It is only until Clarissa comes to a standstill in her life where she needs to reevaluate her identity does this repressed desire come out. Sally, as a manifestation of Clarissa’s infantile wish comes through the symbol of flowers and presents Clarissa with an opportunity to regain her sexuality and independence. Nabokov’s work is harder to assess through a psychoanalytic lense because he detested it and wrote on it in an ironic way. But to not read it

even if it was intentionally written as a form of irony would be to miss out on a deep and great example of Freud and his theories.

The unknown trauma of the Nabokov's narrative lies within the silence of Lolita's voice. In the limited space where she is given a voice there is a desperation for her to be heard. Through her letters and paper trail we see that she is marking her identity in a material way as a way of reasserting her identity. The parenthetical statements throughout the text show a fragmented voice, and in them one sees Humbert's own repressed narrative. Part Two gives the reader more of Lolita highlighting the ways in which she was a conventional little girl which contrasts to the idealized version that Humbert has of her in his head. Both of the novels have females as the driving force within the novel. Nabokov as a male writer cannot enter what Cixous calls the ideological theater, so his ability to write Lolita's narrative is limited. Woolf is able to write both Septimus and Clarissa's trauma because she is able to occupy both spaces. Both of these novels use the language of trauma in order to form the identities of their characters.

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